



Prior Learning Assessment (PLA)

Topic Guide

LL 305 – Active Citizens

Adapted from SUNY – Empire State College



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HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

This guide is meant to help you understand the knowledge and skills typically expected of someone who can demonstrate the learning outcomes for LL 305 – Active Citizenship in a PLA Project. This guide is also meant to help you go through the processes of thinking about your experience, refining your academic knowledge, and demonstrating a connection between your experience and knowledge. Answering the following questions and following the prompts will help you develop the essay, which will be your PLA Project.

GENERAL INFORMATION AND REQUIREMENTS

LL 305 – Active Citizens Syllabus

Number of Credits

LL 305 is a 4-credit course. Students who have their PLA Course Match Projects for this course accepted will receive 4 credits.

Level of Learning

As a 300-level class, LL 305 – Active Citizens should be treated as an advanced college-level course.

Page Count and Sources Guidelines

- at least 10-12 pages (2000-2400 words)
- at least 8 sources appropriate for scholarly or professional discourse
- APA style

Note, for this course match, you must have completed a significant project to address a social issue in the community. The project should reflect at least 20 hours of work.

Additional Resources

- PLA Advisor (SCPSPLA@depaul.edu)
- University Writing Center (<https://condor.depaul.edu/writing/programs-writing-center-scheduling-appointments.html>)
- Purdue Online Writing Lab APA Style Guide (https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/apa_style/apa_style_introduction.htm)

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Your PLA Project will need to demonstrate how your experience directly meets the Learning Outcomes for the course. Importantly, you will also need demonstrate the Academic Knowledge associated with your experience.

The Learning Outcomes for LL 305 are:

1. Plan and implement a project to address a social issue in the community and reflect on its personal and social significance.
2. Articulate and defend an opinion to raise awareness and promote action on a social issue.
3. Distinguish between actions that ameliorate the effects of inequality and those that address systemic roots.
4. Evaluate corporate social responsibility practices and methods that can promote their effectiveness.

COMPOSING YOUR PLA PROJECT

Follow the outline below by considering the questions and prompts to develop your PLA Project. Simply answering questions and prompts are not sufficient – you will need to expand your writing to demonstrate the depth and comprehensive of your understanding of leadership. Footnotes will indicate which learning outcomes you are addressing. As you respond and revise them into a cohesive essay, remember that a content expert will assess your PLA project based on your 1) Experience, 2) Knowledge and/or Practice, and 3) Reflection & Self-Assessment.

Writing Your PLA Project

Experience

This criterion requires you to communicate relevant descriptions and explanations of personal and/or professional experience related to learning outcome(s). Describe the experience(s) and how you achieved college-level learning. Provide the context and background of your experience, and provide relevant details regarding what you did. For example, you might include a new skill you acquired, what you observed, how you approached the situation, how you solved a problem, and the outcome. Remember leadership can be embodied in multiple positions but it must involve influencing others.

As you reflect upon your leadership experiences, consider ones that show how you met the Learning Outcomes for the course. You are welcome to choose:

- one experience where you met all the Learning outcomes
- or you can choose multiple examples that align with specific groupings of Learning Outcomes.

Knowledge and/or Practice

This criterion requires you to demonstrate understanding of relevant theories, models, or best practices related to learning outcome(s). You must demonstrate understanding of relationship among relevant theories, models, or best practices. Describe and cite the relevant theories, models, practices, and perspectives related to your experience.

Remember you will need to use at least 8 sources appropriate for scholarly or professional discourse and use APA style for citations.

Reflection and Self-Assessment

This criterion requires you to demonstrate reflect upon experience and critically assess your abilities and experiences in relationship to the sources you have included. You must provide self-assessment of your experience showing how it relates to the academic sources you are citing.

Your PLA Project Outline

Note, for this course match, you must have completed a significant project to address a social issue in the community. The project should reflect at least 20 hours of work.

I. Introduction to Active Citizenship and Theoretical Framework

- What does active citizenship mean to you based on your experiences?
- How do established theories and models of active citizenship compare to your personal definition?

Guiding Questions:

- How have your experiences shaped your understanding of active citizenship?
- Which theories or models align with or differ from your personal perspective?
- You might consider the following sources:
 - Levine, P. (2007). What Is Civic Engagement? In *The Future of Democracy: Developing the Next Generation of American Citizens* (pp. 1–13). University Press of New England. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv1xx9bj4.6>
 - Putnam, R. D. (2020). *Bowling alone : the collapse and revival of American community* (20th anniversary edition.). Simon & Schuster Paperbacks.
 - Adler, R. P., & Goggin, J. (2005). What Do We Mean By “Civic Engagement”? *Journal of Transformative Education*, 3(3), 236–253. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1541344605276792>

III. Experience: Community Project

Describe a community project you have participated in. This project should be meaningful to you and should reflect a significant time investment (at least 20 hours).

Guiding Questions

- Did you join an organization or initiate your own project? What inspired your decision?
- What issue did your project address and why was it important to you?
- How did you engage with others to enhance the project’s impact?
- What did you learn, and how did the project contribute to the community?
- Did your project include advocacy or raising awareness of the social issue or the community organization?
- What strategies did you employ to overcome obstacles in your project?
- How did the project’s results align with your goals for social change?

IV. Amelioration vs. Systemic Change

- Analyze the activities that you engaged in for your Community Project. Did you 1) provide resources, 2) teach skills, 3) advocate to change the cause of the problem or 4) research the problem to identify causes or solutions? Compare your personal experiences with actions that ameliorate the problem to those that address systemic roots.
 - Can you provide examples of both types of actions from your experience?
 - Why is addressing systemic change crucial for long-term social improvement?

IV. Articulating and Defending an Opinion

In this section, think about your project and the problem/issue you are working to address in the community. Make an argument for the best way to address that problem or issue, and end with a call to action for others to become involved.

Guiding Questions

- Describe an experience or example from your community project that showcases a social issue.
- How has your project shaped your view on the actions needed?
- What facts support your opinion, and how do you respect differing ideas?
- How does your project reflect the larger change you want to see?
- How can your project motivate others to get involved and make a difference?

V. In this section, think about social responsibility in the workplace. Consider social responsibility practices that you have witnessed at your own workplace (or research social responsibility practices at another workplace.) Evaluate these practices for their effectiveness.

Guiding Questions

- What are the social responsibility practices you have witnessed or researched?
- What social issues are these practices trying to address?
- What criteria should be used to evaluate the effectiveness of these practices?
- Based on these criteria, would you consider these practices effective?
- How could these practices be improved?

VI. Final Thoughts

- Reflect on the key insights and understandings you've gained about active citizenship through your community project.
 - How has this project deepened your understanding of your role as an active citizen?
 - What are the most significant lessons you've learned about social change and civic engagement?

- Articulate a plan for how you will continue to engage in civic activities and address social issues.
 - Based on your experiences, what specific actions will you take to be an active citizen in the future?
 - How will you apply the theories and knowledge you've discussed to real-world situations moving forward?

PLA ASSESSMENT RUBRIC

The content expert who will assess your project will determine whether you have demonstrated mastery of the learning outcomes for the class with the following rubric.

Score	Result	Meaning
9-7 Points	Accept	Student is awarded credit for PLA project.
6 or fewer Points	Revise and Resubmit	Student has 2 weeks to revise PLA project based on content expert feedback.

	Accomplished College-Level Learning	Developing College-level Learning	Beginning College-level Learning	Not College-level Learning
	3 points	2 points	1 point	0 points
EXPERIENCE: Effectively communicates relevant explanation of personal and/or professional experience(s) related to learning outcome(s).	Explanation of experience(s) is comprehensive and detailed. The context and background of experience(s) are described with specific details. There is a clear relationship between the description of the experience(s) and learning outcome(s). Provides specific evidence that learning occurred.	Explanation of experience(s) and the context and background of experience(s) are generally present though with some gaps. There is a general relationship between the description of experience(s) and the learning outcomes(s). Provides general evidence that learning occurred.	Explanation of experience is simplistic and/or incomplete. Minimal context or background of experience(s) was provided. Explanation of relationship between experience(s) and learning outcome(s) is linked but superficial, and is assumed but not explicit. Provides minimal evidence that learning occurred.	Explanation and description of the experience(s) is unclear and/or non-specific. No context or background of the experience was provided. The relationship between experience(s) and the learning outcome(s) is non-existent or scholarly investigation irrelevant. Provides no evidence that learning occurred. Experience is conflated with learning (i.e., length of time is equivalent to mastery).

<p>KNOWLEDGE AND/OR PRACTICE:</p> <p>Effectively communicates relevant theories and/or best practices related to learning outcome(s).</p>	<p>Explanation describes relevant concepts and/or practices and provides analysis (compares/contrasts) with other relevant ideas. Explanation demonstrates critique of strengths/weaknesses of ideas. Secondary sources are appropriate for scholarly or professional discourse.</p>	<p>Explanation generally describes relevant concepts and/or practice, and references other relevant ideas. Explanation may demonstrate adequate description of key idea(s) but there may be gaps in relating it to others. Secondary sources are generally appropriate for scholarly or professional discourse but may exclude key disciplinary concepts and/or be out-of-date.</p>	<p>Explanation superficially describes concepts and/or practice. Conceptual focus may be misdirected or ancillary. Explanation is mainly factual with limited analytical engagement. Secondary sources are included but markedly exclude key disciplinary concepts, are misused, and/or are inappropriate for scholarly or professional discourse.</p>	<p>Lack of evidence or understanding of relevant concepts and/or best practices. Lack of appropriate secondary sources and understanding of knowledge related to learning outcome(s).</p>
<p>REFLECTION AND SELF-ASSESSMENT</p> <p>Effectively reflects upon experience and critically self-assesses abilities in relationship to relevant body of knowledge.</p>	<p>Reflection on experience(s) specifically connects to broader body of knowledge. Recognizes relationship and provides clear critique and/or explanation of the significance of the connection. Provides critical self-assessment including descriptions of personal strengths and weaknesses as it relates to the experience(s).</p>	<p>Reflection on experience(s) generally connects to broader body of knowledge. Recognizes overall relationship and provides some critique and explanation of the significance of the connection. Provides some level of self-assessment including general descriptions of personal abilities as it relates to the experience(s).</p>	<p>Reflection on experiences(s) minimally connects to broader body of knowledge. Recognizes that there is a relationship but is unable to critique or adequately explain the significance of the connection. Provides superficial level of self-assessment that focuses on what one accomplished rather than how well they accomplished.</p>	<p>Lack of reflection on how experience connects to broader body of knowledge. Lack of evidence connecting experience within body of knowledge. Lack of self-assessment on one's abilities or performance.</p>

EXAMPLES OF GENERAL PLA TOPICS AND LEVELS OF LEARNING

	Building	Project Management	Spanish Culture	Professional Communication
NOT college-level	Know how to put up wallboard	Work to complete items on a checklist given to you	Traveled in Spain twice, for two weeks each time	Sends emails and text messages at work
Beginning college-level	Describe why walls are constructed a certain way	Create a timeline and supervise the completion of tasks	Describe trends and practices related to daily life, holidays, food, religion, etc.; familiar with some Spanish history related to contemporary attitudes and practices List trends and practices related to daily life, holidays, food, religion, etc. Describe some aspects of Spanish history	Communicates in the workplace by writing emails, instant messages and reports for a general audience
Developing college-level	Describe why walls are constructed a certain way Understand how to design a building so the walls stay up Explain why walls are constructed a certain way List the advantages and disadvantages of different methods for building a wall	Create a timeline and supervise the completion of tasks Work to create cooperation of all parties concerned with the project	Discuss trends and practices related to daily life, holidays, food, religion, etc. Identify sub-groups within the overall culture Describe some aspects of Spanish history related to contemporary attitudes and practices	Communicates in the workplace by writing emails, instant messages and reports for a variety of stakeholders Identifies characteristics of different professional communication genres

Accomplished college-level	<p>Make decisions to design a building so the walls stay up</p> <p>Explain why walls are constructed a certain way</p> <p>Analyze the advantages and disadvantages of different methods for building a wall</p>	<p>Create a timeline and supervise the completion of tasks</p> <p>Work to create cooperation of all parties concerned with the project</p> <p>analyze problems or issues and amend the plan; evaluate the outcome of the project</p>	<p>Analyze nuances related to attitudes and practices</p> <p>Identify sub-groups within the overall culture and analyze the sub-groups relationships with each other</p> <p>Compare Spanish history with contemporary attitudes and practices</p>	<p>Analyzes professional communication genres to develop complex, diverse, and effective written and oral communication</p> <p>Adjusts communications to mindfully consider audience, situation, context, and style</p>
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This topic guide was modified from [SUNY – Empire State College’s Diversity in the Workplace PLA Topic Guide](#).

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Office of Prior Learning Assessment (OPLA)

The Office of Prior Learning Assessment website provides guidance for students seeking to be awarded college credit for prior experience.

PLA Advisor (SCPSPLA@depaul.edu)

A Prior Learning Assessment advisor is available to help you throughout the process. They can help you understand the requirements of a PLA project and are happy to provide feedback on in-progress work.

Course Match PLA Examples

Scroll down to find a few examples of completed Course Match PLA projects.

5 Tips About PLA from a Student

Just what it sounds like—a student who has successfully completed PLA projects shares their tips for success.

The Writing Center

Peer writing tutors are available to help at all stages of the writing process. They can review completed work, in-progress drafts, and even assist with planning and outlining. You can meet with a tutor in-person or online!